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THE

Old and New Testament Student

VOL. XI.

NOVEMBER, 1890.

No. 5.

TO ONE who possesses what may be termed an orderly mind, it must at first appear a strange thing that, in so many cases, Scripture material is not arranged chronologically. One is really puzzled, when he first makes the discovery that the sacred writers did not, for some reason or other, take the pains to put their matter, even when it was historical, in the order in which the events described took place. The facts are so many and so clear that some way must be found to account for them. It is unreasonable to assume that the writer made an effort to put his material in chronological order and failed in the effort. This would reflect too severely on his ability as an author. Nor is it supposable that, in any number of cases, the original writer placed it in chronological order, and that copyists have displaced it. There is sufficient evidence to prove that this has sometimes happened in the case of verses; but no sane man would try to explain in this way the multitude of departures from the chronological order which are known to exist. It must be, then, that the writer did not make an effort to secure chronological order. He certainly might have so arranged his narrative, if he had tried, but he did not try. The fact is, we must conclude, that the question of chronological order did not seem to him an important one. The purpose he had in view could be attained without it. He probably did not consider the question. He had a distinct end in mind, and this end he accomplished. We cannot consider here the nature of the purpose which guided him. It is sufficient to say that it was a purpose independent of modern historical methods.

INSEPARABLY connected with this lack of chronological order, and certainly in part responsible for it, is another fact, no less puzzling to the inquiring mind, viz., that in so many instances, the writer has failed to give us any indication of when or where a particular event occurred, or a particular prophecy was uttered. The insertion of four or five chronological statements in the Book of Judges would have saved us from the overwhelming flood of conflicting theories (in all, fifty) which have from time to time been presented in reference to the chronology of this book. It is hardly possible for one to get a correct understanding of the facts concerning Sennacherib in Isaiah 37: 37, 38, until it is known that twenty years elapsed between the events described in these two verses. One wonders why Ezekiel should have been so exact in this matter, while in Isaiah but few sermons have a definite statement of the time of their utterance. What an amount of discussion would have been rendered unnecessary, if a more exact statement had been made somewhere of the time of the residence in Egypt, whether 430, or 230 years. It appears that many of the Old Testament writers exercised little or no care to indicate the time of their writing. Sometimes the date is given, more frequently, perhaps, it is omitted. What shall we say about this fact? It will not do to assume that the date was originally given in every case, and has been lost. It must be that indications of chronology were not essential to the plan of the writer. His work, the thing he sought to accomplish, the idea he endeavored to convey, was, in no sense, dependent upon a date. Let us hold these things in mind, and, at another time, consider one or two other matters which stand closely related with them.

ONE of the apparent miracles of organization and growth in modern times is the Christian Endeavor. The progress of this movement is something almost incredible. Two questions are all the time suggesting themselves: (1) Is this progress to continue? (2) Is the ground, already gained, to be maintained? We believe,—and there are many who share with us the opinion,—that the answer to both of these

questions, is largely to be determined by the attitude assumed toward a true and vigorous Bible-study. The thing of all things, essential to spiritual growth—the growth of the Christian must be spiritual, if anything—is Bible-study; not mere Bible reading, but downright study. If the Christian Endeavor is to *grow*, in the greatest and best sense of the word, it must undertake Bible-study as an organic part of its work. It cannot afford to trust this work to the Sunday-school, to the family, or to any other agency. Let all these agencies do Bible work, each in its own way; but let the Christian Endeavor, also, if it would preserve its own existence, organize a work for its membership, a work so arranged as, when done, to furnish the foundation for the superstructure which is now being erected to so dizzy a height, and with such amazing rapidity, as to occasion no small degree of alarm. Many leaders in the work have already expressed this feeling. The recent action of the New Hampshire, Iowa, Wisconsin and other State Conventions certainly points in this direction. It is time, *now*, to act.

IN a recent discussion of Babylonian Seals, attention was called to the fact that these seals are marked with emblems of the gods of the Babylonian pantheon. It is curious also to note that the earliest of these seals present a front view, full face, of the deities, while in those which are later the representation is in more or less of a profile. What does this fact signify? Is it that, as the gods were enveloped in greater sanctity, they were removed from the direct contemplation of their worshippers? Does it recall the biblical conception whereby no man can look upon the face of Jehovah and live? Or, should we rather see in it the growing consciousness of sin, as though, by a symbolic representation, the gods would turn their eyes from beholding the guilt of man? Thus it would ally itself with the thought of Adam, who, after his sin, would fain hide himself from God in the thick of the wood. The subject is an interesting one, and perhaps significant of a mode of thought among those ancient peoples which brings them near to their Hebrew brethren.

No thoughtful student of the religious movements of our times can fail to see that they are chiefly characterized by some special attitude towards, or view of, the Bible. Perhaps to say that they are *chiefly* characterized thus is too indefinite a statement and therefore misleading. Certainly there can be no doubt that the positions taken by schools of religious thought in reference to the Bible is the *fundamental* thing about them. This conditions their progress. This determines their direction. That this will finally decide their permanence and usefulness in the world, none can fail to recognize.

THE subjects considered in the "Symposium" contained in the present number of the STUDENT are, from this point of view, of the highest importance. The fundamental questions concerning the fundamental Book—what can be of more burning interest to men of our time? It is believed that the answers there given to the inquiry concerning the great problems of Bible study are not only well-considered but exceedingly helpful. Younger scholars offer their testimony which is found in striking harmony with the conclusions of older and experienced students of life and the Word. The impressive and timely suggestions as to the Bible in its relation to personal life and in its contribution to the knowledge and appropriation of God and of the Christ, are of the utmost value in these days, when the progress in the intellectual study of the Bible is so wonderful and fascinating. It is never to be forgotten that such study is only a means, though an indispensable means, to spiritual growth.

THE question which by all is recognized as vital, in many ways the question of questions, is that of Inspiration. The soberness and vigor with which the writers deal with this is admirable. They do not agree at all points and it is not desirable that they should agree. Some are willing to concede more to biblical criticism than are others. There is a common desire to be rid of the ordinary theological nomenclature

which obscures the facts that it seeks to unfold. In many respects the contributions of these scholars show that a new way of looking at this problem has come to us—a way which is farthest from the scholastic, which may rather be termed the vital. It recognizes that it is dealing with a living body not with a dead corpse. Language concerning such a phenomenon must be as living as its subject. It must be ample enough to admit new facts when they appear. A statement has recently been made on this subject by an English scholar which may profitably be considered in connection with those in the "Symposium." It is as follows: "We have no right to prescribe to God the method of His address to men. He employs human instruments, and it is not for us to say how far He will permit the human element—the element of imperfection—to characterize the vehicle of His communications. Let us but be sure that He has spoken to us, and our further questions as to the form and mode of His speech can only be solved by our study of the oracles themselves. *A definition of Inspiration should be the end and not the beginning of our research.*" It may be that none of the writers would entirely agree with this. Some would certainly oppose it. It dwells upon one side of the living organism. It may fail to emphasize duly its other aspects. A modification of it may be accepted from the pen of an American theologian who says: "The important thing is not to get a verbal theory; the important thing is to get a supernatural theory. In relation to God, inspiration is but a part of the supernatural plan of redemption. In relation to the man inspired, inspiration is the supernatural raising of his entire person to the highest power. As to the Book, it is the *result* of this supernatural purpose and process. More than that, the Holy Ghost is *now* with the word to keep it safe, to vitalize it and make it the power of God unto men. The whole thing is supernatural; and yet the human element is as plainly in it as it is in the person of our Lord."

The subject is a great and a complex one. Patience, forbearance, common sense, piety, scholarship, must enter into its discussion. It is not to be doubted that a solution for our time, if not for all time, will come under the guidance and blessing of the living God.